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HISTORICAL MEMOIR
OF THE
LAST YEAR OF THE LIFE
OF
FREDERICK II.
KING OF PRUSSIA,

READ IN THE PUBLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE
ACADEMY OF BERLIN,

On the 25th of January, 1787;

BY THE
COUNT DE HERTZBERG,

Curator and Member of the Academy.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR J. BELL, BOOKSELLER TO HIS ROYAL
HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES.

1787.

HISTORICAL MEMOIR

OF THE LAST YEAR OF THE LIFE OF

F R E D E R I C K I I.

KING OF PRUSSIA.

THIS Academy having been accustomed to celebrate the 24th of January, the birth-day of the King, its restorer, in a public assembly; and the custom being intended to be continued in future as a commemoration of the revival of the Academy on that day, I imagined I could not better discharge my duty as an academician, than in reading before this auditory a Memoir relative to some object of utility to the state, and in giving at the same time an abridged account of the public transactions of the last year, and of the administration of a Sovereign, who for a long time has been considered as the model for Princes, and who has nothing to apprehend from the notoriety of his actions. I have had the satisfaction to find, that a publication thus frankly communicated has been generally applauded, both within and without the kingdom, by wise and impartial persons, and has been honoured with the approbation, very flattering to me, of the first and most respectable sovereigns in Europe; that it has more particularly made known the prosperity and intrinsic force of the Prussian Monarchy, so inconsiderable as to extent and compass; and that, for the general good,

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it has at the same time excited the admiration and roused the emulation of the other European states.

It is a very afflicting circumstance to us, that this is the last time I can discharge so honourable a duty; death having on the 17th of last August snatched from us Frederick II. that Sovereign so much beloved and admired, who has so long furnished the interesting subject of my lecture. We should have had cause to be inconsolable at this loss, had not that King, no less great after his decease than in his life, formed by his precept and example a successor, whose reign is a *recommencement* of the former, to use an expression of his own; who conducts his administration on the same principles, rectifying them where human imperfection renders it necessary; and who follows, in the same paths of justice, benignity, and public virtue, to that solid fame which is its sure and merited reward.

Although the late King lived only half of the year, nevertheless it would furnish me with materials sufficient for a Memoir as full as those of the preceding years, if time and circumstances permitted or required it; but his internal administration having been generally uniform, it will be enough to say, that Frederick II. in the last year of his reign did very nearly the same things as in the preceding years of public tranquillity. He executed and accomplished all those undertakings, which I announced, as having been projected and resolved on, at the end of my last Memoir *on the true Riches of Nations*; he caused the sum of three millions of crowns to be issued, and employed in the execution of those purposes, to which they were said to be destined in the same enumeration: but he went still a good way farther, as he always did when the circumstances of the case required it. The spring of the preceding year having produced great overflowsings of the the Vistula, the Oder, and the Warta, the King ordered the dykes to be repaired immediately; and disposed of near half a million of crowns for that service, not only to indemnify the unfortunate inhabitants, who had suffered by those inundations, but to put them into a condition to restore their lands. I cannot recollect, without being affected, how that great King, having learnt many estates
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on the banks of the Oder had been entirely covered with sand by the inundation, offered his ministers in the department of finance any sum that might be necessary to restore those lands to their former good condition, by removing the mountains of sand; and with what regret he yielded to their representations of the physical impossibility. The crops of the years 1785 and 1786 having been very small, and below mediocrity in all the Northern countries, the King took such judicious and prompt measures, that the price of corn was not much raised in his dominions; and that the inhabitants, and his military magazines, notwithstanding what was drawn for the subsistence and sowing of the country, were supplied at the ordinary price; and that we were able to make a very considerable exportation of corn from the ports of Memel, Königsberg, D'Elbing and Dantzic, for Denmark and Sweden. Moreover, the population and the manufactures of the Prussian States did not suffer on account of the scarcity of those two years, as generally happens in other parts on such an occasion*. We had during that time, in all the Prussian States,

	Marriages.	Births.	Deaths.	Surplus of births.
in 1786	- 45,259	- 211,188	- 161,827	- 49,361
in 1785.	- —	- 210,037	- 157,606	- 53,126

When we compare this list of the year 1786, with those of the preceding ones of 1784 and 1785, which I published in my

* At Paris a remarkable dispute happened among the Journalists concerning the population of the Prussian states. Mr. *Mallet Dupan*, Editor of the *Journal de Paris*, having advanced, from one of my academical dissertations, that the population of Prussia had been almost doubled in the reign of Frederick the Second, the *Abbé Baudeau*, Editor of the *Mercure de Paris*, maintained, that upon a calculation it would not appear to have increased more than a third: that the number of people in Prussia in 1740 was 2,240,000, and in 1785, only five millions and a half, of which two and a half being set off for the newly-acquired states, the population of the old ones would only be three millions. But Mr. *Baudeau* made two mistakes, in ascribing to all the Prussian states, in 1785, a population of only five millions and a half, while it in reality amounted to six millions, comprehending the forces, and in allowing two millions and a half for the new states, instead of two millions

my Academical Discourses of those two years, we shall find that the number of births and deaths has been nearly equal in those respective years, notwithstanding 1786 was not so prosperous or productive as the years immediately before it; consequently, that the population must have been the same, and that the births must have exceeded the deaths in the same proportion. I can make the same observation, and to more advantage, respecting the produce of the Prussian manufactures, which during the course of the year 1786 amounted to thirty-four millions of crowns; whereas in 1785, it was only thirty millions, as I mentioned in my Academical Dissertation of the foregoing year. This considerable surplus was owing to the linen manufacture having exceeded its former produce by two millions, as well as the woollen a million more than in the year 1785, and to the tobacco raised in the country, which was before reckoned at only a million, having in that year got up to near two millions and a half. Here I must repeat a remark made in my last Memoir, that these thirty-four millions do not form the total of the value of the Prussian commodities and manufactures, many important articles not being comprehended, as wood, corn, salt, hemp, and minerals in general. Having already exhausted in my former *Dissertations on the Population and true Riches of Nations*, what I thought proper to publish of the astonishing improvements which the late King made in the interior administration of his government, I shall confine myself to the few observations I have just made, to shew that Frederick II. exercised the same indefatigable attention to the interior management of his affairs, and with the same success, during the last seven months of his life, in spite of the painful and mortal malady with which he was all that while afflicted. I can and ought to do the same justice to that great King in regard to foreign affairs,

millions only. Now, setting it down as a fact, which we may very safely do, according to the numeration, that the population of all the Prussian states was in 1740, only 2,240,000, and in 1785, six millions, and that we must deduct no more than two millions for the new states; then it is certain that the population of the old states increased between 1740 and 1785 to the amount of 1,660,000 persons, and consequently we may assert with truth that it was nearly doubled.

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and the grand political objects, which concern Europe in general, and Prussia in particular. Notwithstanding his desperate situation, he did not remit for a moment his custom, to read all the dispatches of his foreign ministers, to dictate every morning, from four to seven, the answers that were to be sent immediately to those dispatches, and to keep up a regular correspondence with the ministers of his cabinet and those for foreign affairs, on all great political concerns. Thus did he continue, during those seven months of the year 1786, to labour in establishing his last grand System of the *Germanic Union*; at the same time he interposed, as efficaciously as circumstances would permit, in the disputes of Holland, and maintained the principles he had laid down, and the rights of his own state against the claims of the city of Dantzic. He kept up the same exact and daily correspondence with the ministers in the department of justice, and in that of finance; and directed himself, without any minister or general, the whole of the military correspondence, dictating his orders to his secretaries and aid-du-camps. I remember that, a few days before his death, he even prescribed to these last all the manœuvres that were to be performed at the reviews in Silesia, adverting to the minutest circumstances of locality. At the same time he sent for General *D'Anhalt* to Potzdam, to impart some grand arrangements for the levy of free battalions, to expedite the movement of the army in case of a war, with other matters. In the same circumstances, he ordered to Potzdam the ministers of state *De Hoym* and *De Werder*, and the privy counsellor *Schutz* from Pomerania, to settle with them some new plans for the cultivation of land, and the improvement of manufactures, which he proposed to have executed in 1787, in the different provinces; and particularly that which he had so much at heart, to have new villages built at his own expence in all the districts, where the labourers resided on plains of too great extent, or where population appeared to be too limited. He took also particular pleasure in the execution of a design he had entertained, to cause 300 sheep and rams to be brought from Spain, in order to improve the breed of our own flocks.

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As these sheep were to pass, a few days before his death, by Potzdam, he expected them with impatience, that some of them, as he himself said, might come to *pay him a visit* at Sans Souci. I mention these circumstances, though they may seem minute, to illustrate the benevolence of his mind, always attentive to embrace every object of public utility.

And this I may alledge with the more confidence and knowledge of the matter, as the last five weeks of his life, from the 9th of July to the 17th of August, when he died, I passed by his desire at his palace of Sans Souci. The Counts *De Schwerin*, *De Gortz*, *De Lucchesini*, and *De Pinto*, who were with him three or four hours a day, can join me in the attestation, though much swollen and incommoded with the dropsy, so that he could not move, without assistance, from a chair in which he rested day and night, not being able to enjoy the comfort of a bed; and though it was evident he suffered dreadfully, he never betrayed the least symptom of uneasiness, or any disagreeable sensation; but preserving always his serene, contented, and tranquil air, and without ever speaking of his condition, or of death, he conversed with us on the ordinary topics of the day, in the most cordial and agreeable manner; on literature, ancient and modern history, rural affairs, and particularly gardening, to which he was greatly devoted, and which he cultivated incessantly. His regular and constant custom was, after having read, night and morning, the dispatches of his foreign ambassadors, with the reports military and civil of his generals and ministers, to send either at four or five o'clock, as the exigency of affairs required, for his three Cabinet Secretaries in succession, to one of whom he dictated the answers to be given to each of his ministers at other courts, which he afterwards communicated to me; and to the other two his orders and directions to his ministers of state and his general officers on matters of military concern, or of finance, or justice, as well as his answers to the letters and applications of individuals; and that in so minute and regular a mode, on subjects wonderfully combined, that the Secretaries

aries had nothing to do, but to apply the titles, dates, and the usual formalities. After having discharged this business, about seven or eight o'clock he ordered in the commandant of Potzdam, the Lieutenant General *De Robdick*, and his aid-du-camps, to give them verbal orders, concerning the duties of the garrison for the day. It was not till he had thus fulfilled all the duties of a Sovereign, that he for a few moments saw his surgeon, and sometimes a physician to direct those attentions requisite in his situation. About eleven, the Counts *De Schwerin*, *De Gortz*, *De Lucchesini*, and *De Pinto*, with myself joined him, and conversed with him till the clock struck twelve, when he dismissed us, and took his dinner alone. In the afternoon, he signed all the dispatches and letters which he had dictated in the morning, and which his Secretaries were obliged to send off at that time. He again sent for us at five o'clock, and kept us with him till eight, when we withdrew to supper, and left him to pass the remainder of the evening in having passages read to him from ancient authors, such as Cicero, Plutarch, &c. After which he took such repose as his condition would permit. This course of life was invariably continued till the 15th of August, 1786, on which day he dictated and signed his dispatches in a manner that would have done honour to a minister the most conversant in the routine of business. It was not till the 16th of August that he ceased to discharge the great function of a king and a minister of state; on which day he was deprived entirely of sense; and on the morning of the 17th exhaled his mighty soul in my presence, and that of the physician, Dr. *Selle*, without any convulsive movement. I hope this detail of the last moments of the life of Frederick II. will not appear indifferent to the Academy, or to the public; it will prove this great man sustained his character and remained the same to the last moment of his life, without having his faculties deranged by the ordinary infirmities of nature.

I flatter myself that I shall not displease in giving here a picture of the public life of Frederick the Second, slightly sketched, but exhibiting the principal springs that directed
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his political conduct in the various events of his very long reign. This exposition will serve at the same time to explain the motives of his conduct, and to blunt a little the edge of that censure, which sometimes without justice, and at others with too great severity, has been cast upon it. I shall not do it in detail, and shall only follow my memory, having perused the papers in the Archives, and having, since 1745, when I first entered into the service, been in part an actor and in part a spectator, through the course of that memorable reign.

FREDERICK THE SECOND, born on the 24th of January 1712, received an austere education, rather suited to a private individual than a prince, conformable to the principles and the character of his father Frederick William. Having in 1731 betrayed political and matrimonial designs, different from those of the Sovereign, he was arrested and tried at Custrin; where he owed the preservation of his life merely to the justice and the firmness of the General Officers, his judges. He was obliged, however, to submit to the mortification of seeing his friend, the Lieutenant de Katt, beheaded. For some time after that incident, he was permitted to reside at Custrin, and was obliged to attend the Chamber of Finance, which in the end was of great advantage to him. The King, his father, being afterwards reconciled to him, he espoused, by his order, in 1732, the Princess of Brunswick, the present worthy Queen Dowager. He fixed his residence with her at the castle of Rheinsberg, where he afterwards passed the greatest part of his time in retirement, in the study of the art of war and military exercises with his regiment; or in literary pursuits, of which the principal was a constant correspondence with Suhm, Voltaire, and other literati, as well as with Marshal Grumbkow, on affairs of state. Of the latter correspondence a very curious volume is still preserved in the public Archives.

From the year 1732, he exemplified in his conduct the strictest maxims of filial obedience, and retained the affection and entire confidence of his father till the death of the latter, on the 31st of May, 1740.

Frederick

Frederick the Second then succeeded to the dominion of a kingdom in very good order, with an army of 70,000 men, and a considerable treasure. The male branch of the House of Austria having become extinct much about the same time, by the demise of the Emperor Charles VI. and the Princes of Bavaria, of Saxony, and of Spain, having laid claim to the inheritance, either wholly or in part, in opposition to the late Emperor's daughter, Maria Theresa, and to the Pragmatic Sanction; Frederick seized an occasion, which he thought favourable, to reclaim and vindicate the rights of the House of Brandenburg on four Dutchies of Silesia, which had been unjustifiably wrested from his ancestors. Frederick the First had renounced his pretensions to them for the inadequate cession of the circle of Schwibuss, as an equivalent; but the crooked policy of the Court of Vienna having violated the stipulation, his claim upon the Dutchies was revived. Frederick demanded of the Queen of Hungary, only the Dutchies of Glogau and of Sagan. In return, he offered two millions of crowns, together with his guaranty of the Pragmatic Sanction, and the Imperial dignity for the Grand duke of Tuscany, her husband.

Having received only short and reiterated refusals, he entered into an alliance with the King of France, and the Electors of Saxony and Bavaria. The latter he placed on the Imperial throne; and conquered all Silesia, in 1741 and 1742, by the two victories of Molwitz and Chotusitz. But finding himself feebly supported by his allies, he yielded to the propositions of the Courts of Vienna and London, and concluded, under the guaranty of the King of England, on the 11th of June, 1742, the treaty of Breslaw; by which the Queen of Hungary made the important cession to him of Upper and Lower Silesia, reserving only the Dutchies of Jagerndorff, Troppau, and Teschen.

Frederick employed the years 1742 and 1743, with a part of 1744, in cultivating the arts of peace, and particularly in putting his recent conquests upon the same footing with his old possessions. He took advantage also of this interval, to re-establish this academy, which, after being

founded by the First Frederick, had been neglected during the reign of Frederick William, and was preserved in existence only by the efforts of its own German members. In 1744, the King perceiving that the Queen of Hungary had driven the Emperor Charles VII. out of all the Electorate of Bavaria, as far as Francfort; and that her army, after having passed the Rhine, had opened its way into France; and having thus a moral certainty, that with a continuance of these successes, she would not fail in time to renew her claims in Silesia, he entered on that same year into a new alliance with France, the Emperor Charles the VII. and the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel. He marched at the head of 80,000 men into Bohemia, where he took the garrison and town of Prague; by which he disengaged France, and obliged the Austrian army to repass the Rhine, and to return into Bohemia. Frederick being then assailed at once by all the Austrian forces, and finding no division made in his favour by the French, as should have been done, by a pursuit of the army commanded by Prince Charles of Lorraine, he was obliged to evacuate Bohemia, and to retire with some loss.

The Austrians, reinforced by the Saxon army, penetrated Silesia, in the commencement of the campaign of 1745; and thought themselves sure of making a conquest of it. They were, however, entirely defeated by Frederick, near Hohenfreidberg, who entered Bohemia, and kept his ground in that country by the unexpected victory at Sohr, till the end of the campaign; when, passing through Silesia, he returned to Berlin. But having discovered, in the midst of the pleasures of the Carnival, that a combined force, under the orders of the Austrian General, De Grune, was destined to cross Lusatia, and to surprize him in Berlin; he flew into Silesia, and with a small force moved on to Meissen on the left of the Elbe; pushed the other part of the army, under the command of the Prince of Dessau, from Magdeburg to Dresden, obliged that Prince to gain the battle of Kesselsdorff; afterwards entered as it were in triumph into Dresden; caused the opera of Arminius to be performed; and concluded, by the negotiation of his Minister the Count de Podewils, a new pacification, on the

25th

25th of December 1745, with the courts of Vienna and Saxony, under a fresh mediation and guaranty of the English Court; and in consequence of a negociation of only 24 hours; corresponding to the time expended in the whole expedition, which had not taken up an entire month. He made this new peace, which once more secured to him Silesia, under the joint guaranty of England and Russia; and in virtue of which he acknowledged the election of the Duke of Tuscany to the Imperial dignity, in September, 1745, contrary to his protest. He made this peace, because he was threatened with an attack from Russia---because France would not act offensively on the other side of the Rhine--- and because the Emperor Charles VII. on whose part he had first undertaken the war, was just dead, while his son, the new Elector of Bavaria, had agreed on a separate peace with Austria at Tussen.

Whoever examines, without prejudice, this concise but exact recapitulation of events between 1740 and 1745, will acknowledge, if the late King of Prussia changed several times his system of politics within that period, he had always very sufficient reasons for such procedure; and that in acting thus, he was perfectly irreproachable, as he always acted the part of a sagacious politician, who prefers being a principal to an auxiliary; and as he never took a subsidy from France, whilst he was in alliance with her, notwithstanding what was publicly reported.

After the second war in Silesia, and the treaty of Dresden, Frederick enjoyed eleven years of peace, from 1745 to 1756. During this pacific interval, he devoted his time entirely to the Muses and to domestic politics. He made many improvements in the interior government of the state, encouraged agriculture, arts and manufactures, increased and meliorated the commerce, finances, and revenues of the state, of the treasury, and of the army, which was then augmented to 160,000 men. To give particular accounts of all his domestic operations, would require a very large volume; I can, therefore, only just mention the principal facts. He wrote, and first printed, in 1746, on the conclusion of the peace of Dresden, the celebrated *Memoirs of*

Brandenburg, which comprehend the history of his ancestors to the commencement of his own reign; and for which I furnished him with the greatest part of the materials, extracted from the Archives, particularly for the history of the thirty years war, and for the military history of Brandenburg; a work to which I was recommended as a young man just arrived from the university. In 1752, I also compiled for him a summary of all his negociations. During the same interval, he composed his grand poem on the *Art of War*, and all the pieces both in prose and verse that are to be found in the first collection of the works of the Philosopher of Sans Souci. He effected the first reform of justice by the Grand Chancellor *Cocceji*, to whom the King himself suggested the plan, which he thought to comprehend a code of laws similar to that of Justinian, though it was nothing more than a regulation of the forms of proceeding. The solicitors were laid aside, and the processes curtailed; but the fees of court were still too burthensome for the plan to be completed of reducing the expence of law-suits. The King then commenced his great buildings at Berlin and Potsdam. He established colonies, cleared waste lands, and made the canals of Finow and Pläuen to join the rivers of the Oder, the Havel, and the Elbe. He formed at Emden two trading companies, to open a commerce with China and Bengal; both of which failed through the want of skill in the Directors. He was the first in establishing the principles of the Maritime Neutrality in opposition to the Crown of England; and procured indemnification to his subjects for the captures made upon the shipping by English privateers, during the war between that nation and the French. This was effected by withholding two hundred thousand crowns of the two millions advanced by England to the House of Austria, on the cession of Silesia by the peace of Breslau.

While engaged in such an infinite variety of interior arrangements, Frederick did not cease to take a considerable part in the negociations of the several European princes. He sent the *Sieur d'Annon* as his Plenipotentiary to the Congress at Aix-la-Chapelle, in 1748, who there obtained the guaranty of all the contracting powers to the cession of Silesia.

Silesia. Notwithstanding the separate peace concluded at Dresden, he continued his alliance with the Court of France, to which he added, a Treaty of Commerce with that country in 1754. He also entered into an alliance with Sweden in 1747, in concert with France. In adherence to the same system, he opposed, in 1750, and for several years after, in conjunction with the French King and the Electors Palatine and of Cologne, the election of a King of the Romans, proposed by the Courts of Vienna, Hanover, and Dresden; which occasioned much intrigue and negotiation on all sides in Germany. But his principal attention was always occupied on the dangerous designs, which he supposed the Court of Vienna entertained for the recovery of Silesia. He was well aware of the personal hatred that subsisted towards him on the part of the Empress of Russia and her ministers. He was persuaded, that a system of politics, hostile to Prussia, had been framed by the the Courts of Vienna, Petersburg and Saxony; and he discovered, in 1753, by accident, and the treachery of a Saxon secretary, those three Courts had concluded, so early as in 1746, immediately after the peace of Dresden, a Treaty of Alliance and of eventual PARTITION of his dominions, in case of a war. He judged, from this discovery, and from the tenor of the Saxon dispatches, of which he received copies by every post from 1753 to 1756, that the ministers of those three courts were continually at work to bring about a renewal of hostilities. In the month of June 1756, he received private information, which had all the appearance of authenticity, that the time was arrived for those courts to enter upon the execution of their project, and that he would be attacked in the beginning of the next year. Three times he required explanations on that head of the Empress Queen; but receiving short and unsatisfactory answers, he thought it necessary to set about circumventing their designs, by an attack upon Saxony and Austria, before their armies were ready to take the field. He sent for me privately, on the 20th of August, at Sans Souci, and put into my hands the Saxon dispatches, to draw up a summary of them, which was communicated to every court; that the schemes of those three potentates, and,

and the necessity he was under of taking some measures to render them abortive, might be made manifest to the world.

In pursuance of this resolution, Frederick, in the end of August 1756, marched into Saxony, surrounding the Elector's army near Pirna, captured, and then incorporated it with his own forces; next entered Bohemia, and gained the battle of Lowositz: a victory, however, that was not so decisive as to enable him to keep his ground there; so that he was obliged to retire from Bohemia, and to return to Saxony, where he took up his winter quarters.

In the course of these transactions, he caused the archives of Dresden to be opened, and transmitted to his ministers all the original dispatches of that Court; from which I composed the celebrated MEMORIAL, that proved, from those documents, the Austrian and Saxon ministers had formed projects for bringing on a war, and for making a partition of the Prussian dominions. That such designs were entertained is evident; though as they were only conditional, and depended on the event of the King of Prussia giving rise to a war, it must remain problematical, whether those projects would ever have been put in execution, and whether it would have been most dangerous to wait the event, or to anticipate it. However that may be, the vigilant curiosity of the King, and the minute circumstance of infidelity in a Saxon clerk, produced that dreadful war of seven years, which immortalized Frederick II. and the Prussian nation, but which, at the same time, was near overwhelming it, and brought it to the verge of destruction. I shall not enter into a detail of all the circumstances of that famous war, though I should peculiarly have the means of developing all its springs of action. But as time and circumstances will not permit, I shall only attempt a slight sketch of that large political picture.

The King, when he saw the war, though at a distance, inevitable, hoped to disengage himself from Russia, by an alliance with the King of England, for which purpose he had entered into a secret engagement, at Westminster, on the 16th of January 1756. He hoped that the Court of England, being closely connected with Russia, would

would be able to prevail on that power not to range itself on the side of his enemies. The Court of France then considered its alliance with Prussia at an end, and concluded, in 1756, the famous treaty of Versailles with the Court of Vienna, which still subsists. The French King, who was at war with the King of England on the continent of America, thought it advisable to attack him in his German territories. Desirous also to relieve Saxony, and to entangle the King of Prussia on all sides, he prevailed on Sweden and the greatest part of the Empire, to enter into the new system. In 1757 he detached an army to make a conquest of the King's possessions in Westphalia, and of the Electorate of Hanover; and another to join the Imperial forces, and make its way into Saxony through Hesse, while Prussian Pomerania should be invaded by the Swedes.

The Court of Vienna engaged at the same time that of Petersburg, to attack Prussia with an army of 80,000 men, and drew together all the Austrian forces in Bohemia, towards the frontiers of Saxony and Silesia. The result of this formidable combination was, that destructive war which Frederick sustained jointly with the King of England, the Elector of Hanover, the Duke of Brunswick, and the Landgrave of Hesse, against all the united powers of Austria, France, Russia, Sweden, and the Empire, with a variation of success, but in a manner scarcely credible by posterity, during the course of the years 1757, 1758, 1759, 1760, and 1761, and of which I avoid a detail. This is reserved to other times, other circumstances, and other authors. Major de Templehoff has already given us a perspicuous and interesting definition of the first two campaigns. The death of the Empress Elizabeth, which happened in 1761, delivered the King from one of his greatest enemies, and even procured him an ally in Peter III.; while he lost, on the other hand, the subsidiary assistance he had received from England, by the resignation of the celebrated Pitt, and the appointment of a new minister, by no means favourable to Prussia.

The revolution that took place in Russia in 1762, by the death of Peter III. threatened the King with a renewal of hostilities from that quarter; but the new Empress, better

ter acquainted with her own interests, thought proper to remain neuter; and Frederick, who, by the loss of the fortresses of Schweidnitz and Colberg had been blocked in on all sides, found means during the campaign of 1762 to retake Schweidnitz, and to recover the superiority, as well in Saxony as Silesia. He then contrived to make a separate peace with Russia and Sweden; afterwards with France; and finally with Austria and Saxony, which I had the honour to conclude at Hubertsburg, on the 15th of February 1763, in a manner no less glorious, than advantageous, to the King; as it put a stop to such a dreadful war, without the loss of a single village, with his force indeed much exhausted, but with a proportionate increase of reputation for valour, energy, and resources, to the Prussian monarchy.

After the conclusion of the peace of Hubertsburg, and during the course of the pacific years that followed, from 1763 to 1778, which though in general marked with tranquillity, were not entirely exempt from troubles, Frederick again devoted his attention to the restoration of his desolated provinces, to the re-establishment of his finances, and the recruiting of his army. These cares did not, however, prevent him from providing for the prosperity of individuals; and he succeeded so well, as to replace all in a better and more flourishing condition than before the seven years war, and to give to the Prussian monarchy, that compactness, energy, and splendour, which it possesses at the present moment, and by which it is ranked among the first monarchies in Europe, though so greatly inferior to many in extent of territory. Thus he raised the standing army to 200,000 men, rebuilt all the towns and villages destroyed during the war, established an immense number of plantations, new villages, and manufactures; formed canals, wherever it was practicable, particularly the grand canal of Bromberg, which joins the Vistula to the Oder; gave considerable sums to the nobility in order to enable them to pay their debts and to cultivate their waste lands; of which he himself afforded the example in his own domains; in cutting down woods, draining marshes, and in general making whatever improvements the country was susceptible of,

of, or required, appropriating every year to that purpose two or three millions of crowns. I avoid entering into a more minute detail, because, in my preceding Academical Dissertations, I have touched on the same subjects, though only in such a general and superficial manner, as my other occupations would admit of. It were to be wished, for the advantage of Prussia and of mankind, that the pacific history of the reign of Frederick II. were written at full length by one possessed of means and talents for such an undertaking.

While Frederick appeared to be entirely occupied in the interior administration of his government, he did not fail to take the same direct and effectual part in all the great affairs of Europe, where his interference was as essential as it was glorious. Soon after the peace of Hubertsburg, he formed a treaty of alliance with the Empress of Russia, which was afterwards prolonged, and is in force at this moment. In consequence of that treaty, and the grand system of politics founded on it, the King contrived, together with the Empress, to have Count Stanislaus Poniatowski, after the decease of Augustus II. elected King of Poland; and to secure a religious and civil establishment to the dissidents of that kingdom. In the troubles excited by the famous Confederation of Bar, which were followed by a war between the Russians and the Turks, the King afforded the Russians a pecuniary aid, as stipulated in the treaty of alliance, and likewise sent a great number of his officers, who took part as volunteers in their military operations. These interior commotions in Poland gave rise to a new scene, and to a sudden turn of politics, unlooked for, and almost unprecedented; namely, the Partition of Poland: which great event was produced without a blow, and procured a considerable aggrandizement to the Prussian monarchy, affording it that solidity and connection, which it seemed to want before. The circumstance that gave rise to it was purely accidental, and has hitherto been but little known; the supposition almost universally held, that it was the consequence of a long train of projects, being totally erroneous. The following is the sole and real origin of that event.

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The Empress-Queen having occupied, in 1772, on account of the troubles in Poland, the important Starosty of Zips, contiguous to Hungary, which a former sovereign of the last-mentioned kingdom had mortgaged to Poland for 400,000 ducats, the King and the Empress of Russia, conceived on that occasion, whilst his R. H. Prince Henry, resided at Petersburg, the idea, that if the Court of Vienna proposed taking advantage of the troubles, those of Berlin and Petersburg should, according to the maxims of state policy, make good the pretensions which they might have on the account of Poland. They made in consequence a treaty of partition, to which they afterwards admitted the Court of Vienna, and in virtue of which the King claimed and appropriated to himself all Polish Prussia, with the exception of the towns of Dantzic and Thorn. He wished at first to claim, as appendages to Silesia, the palatinates of Posen and Kalisch; but I made him sensible how much more essential it was to his interests, to endeavour at obtaining Pomerellia with the town of Dantzic, and if that were impracticable, all Polish Prussia, by which he would consolidate at once the principal parts of the Prussian monarchy, and become master of that important river, the Vistula, and of the chief commerce of Poland. I proved in an historical deduction, that Pomerellia was an ancient domain of the Dukes of Pomerania, which the Poles had unjustly wrested from them, after the extinction of the Dantzic line, to the prejudice of the Dukes of Stettin, to whose rights the election of Brandenburg had notoriously succeeded; whilst the Dukes of Pomerania had never expressly renounced their claims on Pomerellia. I produced also irrefragable proofs, that the port of the Vistula did not belong to the town of Dantzic, but was the property of the Abbey of Oliva, and subject to the territorial dominion of the King, as legitimate Sovereign of Pomerellia. In consequence of these deductions and negotiations, the King caused all Polish Prussia, excepting the towns of Dantzic and Thorn, to be taken possession of; an example that was followed by the Courts of Petersburg and Vienna. These proceedings were opposed, as well by the King as the Republic of Poland, by protests and embassies

embassies---till the treaty of Warsaw was agreed on, by which the Republic ceded to the King all Polish Prussia, except the towns of Dantzic and Thorn. She was at the same time obliged to renounce the sovereignty of the districts of Launburg and Butow, and the reversion of the kingdom of Prussia after the extinction of the male line of Brandenburg, to which she had claims, in virtue of the treaty of Welau made in 1656; a renunciation which I advised, as very essential and advantageous to the Prussian monarchy, as well as a cession of the claims on the Port of Dantzic. I composed the treaty of cession and partition during an illness of a very critical nature. This is not the proper occasion to discuss the validity of our pretensions---I have done it in another place, and shall only insist here, that they were infinitely better founded than those of the other potentates. The King afterwards made, in 1775, a treaty of commerce with Poland, and took measures the most just, as well as efficacious, for securing and improving that valuable acquisition; from which the most essential advantage that he derived, was the junction of the Oder and the Vistula, by the Warta, the Netze, and the Canal of Bromberg; of which I had the satisfaction of proving the possibility, in opposition to a geographical error.

While, in the course of this pacific interval, the King acquired, by means no less pacific, all Polish Prussia, which I thought should be named West Prussia; he at the same time concurred in the elevation of the Arch-duke Joseph to the dignity of King of the Romans, and in the assurance of the Dutchy of Modena, by the Empire, to the House of Austria, in consequence of the engagement which I had entered into, in the King's name, by two secret articles in the treaty of Hubertsburg.

The King took no direct part in the long and bloody war which England had to sustain against North America, France, and Spain; but he acceded to the *Maritime Neutrality* as concluded between Russia and other neutral states, to secure respect to their flags from the belligerent powers. By this act, he gave his sanction to a very just principle of the rights of nations, which he had been the first to enforce in 1748; in the same manner as he

was the first to establish, in his Commercial Treaty with the United States of America, the grand principle of the neutrality that is to be observed by one power at war, towards the subjects of another that is not in arms; and by consequence to prohibit all acts of hostility against vessels solely engaged in commerce, and to restrain them to such as are provided for attack or defence. Thus the King of Prussia, without a navy, and without any great maritime commerce, gave the example, and prescribed the ton to all the maritime powers, in causing observance and respect to be shewn to two grand principles in the rights of nations, equally useful and necessary to promote the happiness of mankind, and to ward off many of the evils that are attendant on war.

The King gave, after the year 1778, many other striking proofs of his profound policy; disinterested with respect to himself, any further than it was calculated to preserve the balance in Europe or in Germany, and conducive to the welfare of the co-ordinate princes of the Empire. On the death of the late Elector of Bavaria, the Court of Vienna offered claims to the succession, and in particular to Lower Bavaria. These Frederick opposed in favour of the Palatine and Saxon family. He took up arms on the occasion, and entered Bohemia. Negotiations were begun, but ineffectually, at Berlin and Braunau;----- till at length this breach was repaired in the commencement of 1779, at Teschen; by which pacific determination it was stipulated, that the Court of Vienna should renounce its pretensions to Bavaria, retaining only the district of Burghausen; that six millions of florins should be paid to the Elector of Saxony as an equivalent; and that a recognition should be made of the right of the House of Brandenburg, to re-unite the Margraviates of Franconia to the Electoral dominions, after the extinction of the reigning family.

The project for the exchange of Bavaria being renewed in 1785, the King again opposed it by protests and declarations; and to give these the greater weight, he proposed to the co-ordinate states, the *Germanic Union*, which was formed at Berlin on the 23d of July, 1785, and to which
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a great number of the Electors, and of the most considerable princes acceded, with the sole view of preserving the constitution and equilibrium of the empire. Frederick began, completed, and consolidated that grand undertaking in the two last years of his life, at a time when already attacked by the dropsy, and those other complaints that carried him to the grave. At the same time he turned his attention to the affairs of Holland, and was continually negotiating at Versailles and the Hague, to prevent the fatal consequences that might result from the dissensions of the Dutch, and to preserve the Stadtholdership, and its prerogatives, to the family of his worthy and incomparable niece, the Princess of Orange.

Amidst the agitation of all these important concerns, Frederick II. did not remit in his attention to the interior government of the kingdom, and to the improvement of his territories, according to the grand principles of which I have given the detail, or rather some light sketches, in my former Academic Dissertations. I shall only add, that during that interval of peace, he made a *second reform* in the *administration of justice*, by means of the Grand Chancellor *De Carmer*. Under the auspices of the same minister, he established the famous *System of Credit* in Silesia, in Pomerania, and the Marches; by which the value of land was raised, and interest diminished. He established at the same time in the Marches, and in Pomerania, that excellent *Association*, which secures the country from all losses by conflagrations, for a small and imperceptible contribution. These three arrangements would alone suffice to illustrate and immortalize a whole reign.

Such is the abridged view or summary account of the Life of Frederick the Great, I have thought it right to give this day in an assembly consecrated to his memory, and to the restoration of an Academy, of which he was the author. Through want of time, and other impediments easily conceived, I have but superficially taken a view of the principal events of his reign, as they were connected in a political series. I have had neither design or leisure to embellish

lish with eloquence, or enliven with detail; that must be reserved for those who have time, means, and permission: but I am persuaded that a History of Frederick the Second, written with impartiality, and by an author possessed of ability and sufficient materials, would be a work no less interesting than instructive to sovereigns, to statesmen, to generals, and indeed to mankind at large. It would contain an immensity of matter, would present many singular situations and occurrences, exploits in war and politics scarcely heard of in any other history; faults to be sure incomprehensible---but attended with recollections, amendments, and corrections still more wonderful, which efface the faults and even the remembrance of them.

Frederick the Second wrote his own history, after the example and in the spirit of Thucydides, Polybius, and Cæsar. After finishing the Memoirs of Brandenburg as far as 1740, he begins his own from that time to the peace of Dresden in 1745. I can produce the original of that excellent work written in his own hand, and composed with particular care. There is nothing in it concerning the pacific interval from 1746 to 1756; but after that, he has given an account of all the campaigns in the seven years war, and has last of all composed the history of his reign, from the peace of Hubertsburg to that of Teschen, comprehending the war of Bavaria. These excellent compositions will be printed with the Kings permission, without any essential abridgment or alteration. They do not contain a complete history of the reign of Frederick the Second, which would require compilations and enquiries more particular and extensive; but they will throw new light on the whole history of our times, and will excite afresh the gratitude of the Prussian nation, at the same time that they add new laurels to those which Frederick gathered in his life. To give a specimen of the work, I should imagine it will not be unacceptable to my hearers, if I read to them the King's Preface to the History of his own Times, or the second part of the Memoirs of Brandenburg.

P R E F A C E

TO THE

HISTORY OF FREDERICK H*.

MANY persons have written History, but few with a regard to truth. Some have related anecdotes they were unacquainted with, or that proceeded from their own imagination; others have made voluminous compilations from gazettes, and have with great labour produced books, which contain nothing more than undigested rumours and popular superstitions; others have composed annals of war, insipid and diffuse; in short, the rage for writing has induced some authors to give an account of events that happened some ages before they were born. Scarcely can we collect the principal facts from these Romances; the heroes think, speak, and act according to the genius of the author; he presents us with his own reveries instead of the actions of those whose life he undertakes to relate. All those books are unworthy of being transmitted to posterity; nevertheless Europe swarms with them; and there are persons simple enough to give credit to them. Excepting the judicious M. *De Thou*, *Rapin Thoiras*, and at most two or three others, we have but very poor historians. We should read them with sceptical attention, and pass twenty pages of paralogisms before we come to any thing interest-

* This Preface was written in 1746, and is at the head of the first manuscript copy of that history in the King's own hand. It is different in turn and length from that preface which the King revised in 1775, and which shall be given after this. It is hoped the reader will be pleased to have the two prefaces together, that by a comparison it may be seen, how Frederick thought and wrote as a young prince in 1746, and again as a sovereign advanced in years, in 1775.

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ing or authentic. It is a good deal then to say, that a history is true; but it should be more; it should be impartial. We should write with choice and discernment; and above all, examine and consider objects with a philosophic eye.

Being persuaded that no character rendered important by a termination in *us*; that no Benedictine of the 19th century will arise capable of painting the men of our age, or of giving an idea of those negotiations, intrigues, wars, battles, and all those important events which in our days have embellished the great stage of Europe, I thought it would not be unbecoming me as a contemporary, and as an actor in those scenes, to leave a description of them to posterity. It is to future ages that I dedicate this work; in which I shall endeavour slightly to sketch what relates to other powers; but I shall more particularly enlarge on all that concerns Prussia, as more immediately interesting to my family, who may consider the acquisition of Silesia as the epoch of their aggrandizement.

This morsel of history, which I undertake to digest, abounds with a variety of events no less remarkable for their importance than their singularity. I may even affirm, that since the destruction of the Roman Empire, there has been no æra in history so deserving of attention as that of the death of the Emperor Charles VI. the last male of the House of Hapsburg, which produced that famous alliance, or rather confederacy, of so many kings to ruin the House of Austria.

I shall advance nothing without proof: the Archives are my authority; the relations of my ministers, and the letters which kings, sovereigns, and several eminent men have written to me are my vouchers. In other points I go upon the concurrent testimony of different persons, who may be believed; there is no other way of coming at the truth. The recital of my campaigns will contain only a summary of the most considerable events; nevertheless, I shall not conceal the glory which so many officers have acquired in the course of them: I devote this feeble essay to them, as a monument of my gratitude. I mean to observe the same conciseness in all that regards politics; yet shall carefully
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mark those features that distinguish the character of the age, and of different nations. I shall compare the present time with the past; for our judgment is brought to perfection only by the use of comparison. I shall take a general view of Europe, and shall in my mind cause all the kingdoms of which it is composed to pass, as it were, in review; and sometimes I shall descend to minute details of circumstances which, though little in themselves, have derived importance from their consequences.

As I write only for posterity, I shall suffer no restraint from any public or private consideration. I shall speak out what others have silently expressed; describe princes as they are, without prejudice against my enemies, or predilection towards those with whom I have been in alliance. I shall only speak of myself, when I cannot avoid it; no man, let him be what he may, can greatly draw the attention of future ages. Whilst a King is living, he is the idol of his court; the great offer up incense to him; poets celebrate his name; the people fear him, and have but little regard for him: when he dies, the truth comes out; and envy often retaliates with too much rigour on the disgusting eulogies that flattery had heaped upon him.

It is the business of posterity to pass judgment upon us after we are dead, and our own to judge ourselves while living. When our intentions are pure, when we are disposed to good actions, when our heart is not an accomplice in the errors of our understanding, and when we are convinced that we have done all the good it has been in our power to do for our people, we ought to be satisfied.

You, my future judges, will read in this work of treaties made and broken; and on this head I ought to observe to you, that we must act in subordination to our means and our faculties. When our interests change, we must change with them. Our employment is to watch for the good of our people, and the moment we find that they are endangered by any alliance, we should break it immediately, rather than expose them to hazard. In doing this the sovereign sacrifices himself to the advantage of his subjects. All the annals of the universe furnish in-

stances of this; and, indeed, it is impossible that one can act otherwise. Those who condemn this principle of conduct, are such as regard an engagement or word given to be sacred. They are right; and I think with them, so far as it is applied to individuals: for a man who has given his word to another, even though he has made an inconsiderate promise, which may tend greatly to his own prejudice, is bound to keep it, because honour is above interest; but a prince, who enters into an engagement, does not commit himself alone (otherwise he would be exactly in the case of the private individual), but he exposes large states and great provinces to a thousand evils: it is then better for the sovereign to break a treaty, than to occasion the ruin of his people. What would one think of a surgeon so ridiculously scrupulous as to object to amputating a gangrened arm, because cutting off an arm is a bad action?---would it not be worse to suffer the man to perish, who might be saved by that operation? I will venture to say, that it is the circumstances of an action, what accompanies it and what follows it, that determines whether it is good or evil: but how few judge thus from a knowledge of causes! men, like a flock of sheep, blindly follow their leader: let a man of superior talents say a word, and a thousand fools repeat it after him.

I cannot refrain from making here a few general reflections on the great events which I have chosen to describe. I have found, that in the most powerful states there is more confusion than in the smaller; nevertheless, the greatness of the machine impels it on, and renders a little disorder imperceptible. I have remarked, that princes who carry on war at a distance from their frontiers are always unfortunate, as they cannot recruit or succour the troops that they employ in such a venture. I have observed, that all nations are more valiant when they fight for their own families, than when they invade their neighbours: may not this proceed from a principle implanted in our nature, that it is just to defend one's self, but not to attack others? I have seen the combined fleets of France and Spain unable to resist the English; and I am astonished when I consider, that in the time of Phillip II. the Span-

nish navy alone was superior to that of England and Holland. I remark with surprize, that all those naval armaments produce nothing but the destruction of that commerce which they should protect. On one side the King of Spain presents himself, master of Potosi, in debt in Europe, and having for creditors all the officers of his crown, his domestics, and the artizans of Madrid; on the other, I see the English nation scattering abroad the riches which thirty years industry had accumulated. I contemplate the Pragmatic Sanction, which turns the heads of half the sovereigns in Europe, and the Queen of Hungary dismembering her provinces, in order to support the indivisibility of them. The war kindled in Silesia becomes an epidemical disorder, and increases in malignity in proportion as it extends itself. War taking place in Selesia becomes epidemic, and acquires degrees of malignity in proportion to its extent. The capital of the Christian world opens its gates to the first comer, and the Pope confers benedictions on those who lay him under contribution, no longer daring to hurl his anathemas at them. Italy is subdued and laid waste. The fortune of all is inconstant; no power enjoys uninterrupted prosperity; repulse follows close upon the heels of victory. The English, with the impetuosity of a torrent, carry the Hollanders along with them in their course; and those prudent Republicans, who sent deputies to command their armies, when the greatest men Europe has produced, Eugene and Marlborough, were at their head, think them unnecessary when the Duke of Cumberland and the Prince of Waldeck are appointed to conduct them. The North takes fire, and brings on a war fatal to the Swedes; Denmark is put in motion, which afterwards subsides; while Poland remains calm, having no cause for perturbation. Saxony twice changes sides, and in both of these changes is thwarted in its designs; with one party she gains nothing, and with the other is ruined. But what is most lamentable, is the horrible effusion of human blood. Europe is like a slaughtering house; one would imagine that in every quarter kings had resolved on depopulating the earth. A complication of events changed the causes of war; and the effects continue, after the motives have ceased.

They put me in mind of gamesters, whose rage for play will not be gratified till they have either stripped their adversaries or ruined themselves. If we put the question to an English Minister, why he continues the war? he would answer, because France cannot provide for the expences of the ensuing campaign: and the French Minister would make precisely the same answer to a similar question. Let us suppose that one of the two is right, and that the acquisition of two or three frontier places, or of a small district of territory, ought to be looked upon as an advantage, when we reckon the excessive expences of the war, when we consider how much the people have been oppressed in order to raise the necessary supplies, and especially that it is at the cost of so many thousand lives these conquests have been obtained, who would not be shocked at the view of so many wretches the victims of these fatal contentions? But if you are melted at the distress of a single individual, or of a single family, how much more so must you be, at beholding the fatal vicissitudes of the most flourishing empires and the most powerful monarchies in Europe? This is the best lesson that can be given of moderation. Consider the shipwrecks of ambition, and you cannot fail of opening your ears to the cries of Experience, who warns you, Kings, Princes, and Sovereigns who are to come; let the fable of Icarus, which shews us the consequences of ambition, caution us not to indulge its insatiable impulse.

I must even observe, if a Lewis the Great has experienced a sad reverse of fortune, if a Charles the XIIth. has been almost entirely stript of his possessions, if the King Augustus was dethroned in Poland, and his son deposed in Saxony, if an Emperor was driven from his dominions, what mortal would venture to think himself placed above such a destiny, or would hazard his fortune against the uncertainty of events, the obscurity of the future, and those unexpected contingencies which in the twinkling of an eye defeat the best laid projects? The history of Cupidity is the school for Virtue: ambition makes tyrants, and moderation wise men.

P R E F A C E

TO THE

MEMOIRS OF BRANDENBURG.*

THE greater number of the Histories that have been published are compilations of falsehood, with a small mixture of truth. Of that prodigious collection of facts that has been transmitted down to us, we can only reckon upon the authenticity of such as have made an æra in the affairs of the world, and produced either the rise or fall of empires. It cannot be doubted that there was a battle at Salamis, and that the Persians were conquered by the Greeks. We cannot hesitate to believe, that Alexander the Great subdued the empire of Darius, and that the Romans overcame the Carthaginians, Antiochus and Perseus. Those facts are the more unquestionable, as they possessed themselves of their dominions. History obtains a still greater portion of belief, in what she relates of the civil wars of Marius and Sylla, of Pompey and Cæsar, of Augustus and Anthony, from the authority of contemporary writers, who agree in describing those events. We have no doubt of the destruction of the Western Empire, nor of that of the East; for we see kingdoms that have taken their rise from the dismembering of those empires; but when curiosity invites us to go into the detail of occurrences in those remote ages, we rush into a labyrinth, involved in obscurity

* This preface is to be found at the head of the manuscript of the History of Fredrick II. which he corrected with his own hand in 1775.

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and contradictions. The propensity of human nature to the marvellous, the prejudices of historians, the misguided zeal of individuals for their country, as well as their hatred of rival nations---all those different passions that have guided their pens, have, together with the distance of time between the occurrence and the narration, so altered and disguised the facts, that at the present moment the eyes of a lynx would not serve to develop them.

Nevertheless, among the crowd of ancient authors, we distinguish with satisfaction the description which Xenophon has left of that famous retreat of the *Ten Thousand*, whom he himself commanded and conducted into Greece. Thucydides may be mentioned with the same distinction. We are charmed, when we find in the fragments that remain to us of Polybius, the friend and companion of Scipio Africanus, the relation of facts to which he was an eye witness. The letters of Cicero to his friend Atticus have the same character. He is himself an actor in the grand scenes that he presents. Nor must I overlook the Commentaries of Cæsar written in a noble simplicity of stile; and whatever may be said by Hirtius, conformably to the relations that have been given of the same events by contemporary historians. But since Cæsar, history has been either a panegyric or a satire. The barbarism of the times that followed, made a chaos of the history of the later empire, in which we find nothing that claims our interest or attention, except the memoirs composed by the daughter of the emperor Alexis Commenus; because that princess relates what she had seen. After that period, the Monks, who alone had a little knowledge, left annals which were found in convents, and which have served for the history of Germany; but what materials for history! The French have had a Bishop of Tours, a Joinville, and a *Journal de l'Etoile*, feeble productions of compilers, who set down what they heard at hazard, but who could not have the means of real information. Since the revival of letters, the passion for writing has grown into a rage. We have an abundance of memoirs, anecdotes, and narrations, among which there are very few indeed that are the compositions of authors, who have themselves been actors, or have had con-

confidential appointments at court, or access to the archives of princes---such as, the president De Thou, Philip De Commynes, Vargas, the Fiscal of the Council of Trent, Mademoiselle D'Orleans, the Cardinal De Retz, &c.---to which we may add, the Letters of D'Estrades, and the Memoirs of De Torcy; curious reliques---particularly the latter, which unfolds all the circumstances of the will of Charles II. King of Spain, concerning which there have been so many various opinions.

These reflections, which I have made at different times on the uncertainty of history, suggested to me the idea of transmitting to posterity the principal occurrences in which I have had a part, or of which I have been a spectator; in order that those who shall in future times be invested with the government of this State should be made acquainted with the real situation of affairs when I came to the government, with the motives of my actions, the means I used, the designs of my enemies, the intrigues, the wars; and above all, the glorious exploits by which the names of our officers have acquired so just a claim to immortality.

Since the revolutions which overturned first the Western, then the Eastern Empire; since the astonishing successes of Charlemagne; since the brilliant epoch formed by the reign of Charles V. since the troubles caused by the Reformation in Germany, which continued thirty years; since the war occasioned by the succession to the crown of Spain; no event has taken place more remarkable or more interesting than that produced by the death of the Emperor Charles VI. the last male of the House of Hapsburg..

The Court of Vienna saw itself attacked by a prince, whom it would not have supposed in possession of sufficient force for so difficult an enterprize. A species of conspiracy of sovereigns and kings was immediately formed; all resolved to participate in the immense succession. The Imperial crown passed into the House of Bavaria; and while events seemed to conspire the ruin of the young Queen of Hungary, that princess, by her firmness and address, drew herself out of a dangerous situation; and secured the Monarchy by sacrificing Silesia, and a small part of the Milanese. It was the utmost that could be expected from a young

young princess, who had just ascended her throne; who seized the spirit of government, and became the soul of her councils.

This work being destined for posterity, eases me of the restraint of respecting the living, and of maintaining a reserve, incompatible with the free exposition of truth. I shall be permitted to speak out without dissimulation, from the inmost recesses of my heart. I shall describe Princes as they are, without any partiality towards those with whom I have been in alliance, or hatred to those who have been my enemies. I shall speak of myself, only when necessity induces me, and then, after the example of Cæsar, in the third person, in order to avoid the disgusting repetition of egotism. It is posterity that is to judge us; but if we are wise, we shall anticipate it, by passing a rigorous judgment upon ourselves. The true praise of a patriot prince, is to have a sincere attachment to the public good, to love his country, and to be fond of glory: I say glory; for the happy instinct that animates mankind with the desire of a good reputation, is the true principle of heroic actions. It is the nerve of the soul, which rouses it from its lethargy to the pursuit of enterprizes necessary and praise-worthy.

All that is advanced in these Memoirs, whether it concern state negociations, correspondence between sovereigns, or treaties executed, has its proofs in the Archives. There are eye-witnesses, who can answer for the truth of the military relations, which were deferred two or three days after the events, that they might be made the more exact and authentic.

Posterity will perhaps see with surprise in these Memoirs, the recital of treaties made and broken. Although there are sufficient instances of a similar nature, yet they would not justify the author of this work, if he had no better reason to urge in justification of his conduct.

The interest of the state should be the rule of action to sovereigns. The cases in which treaties may be broken are, 1st. When an ally fails in fulfilling his engagements; 2dly, When an ally meditates treachery, and you have no other means to prevent it; 3dly, When a superior force constrains,

strains, and obliges you to infringe them; 4thly, When you are incapable of continuing a war. From what fatality I know not, but money has that mischievous influence. Princes are the slaves of their resources; the interest of the state is a law to them, and it is inviolable. If a sovereign is bound to sacrifice his person to the safety of his subjects, much more is it incumbent upon him, to sacrifice to that object engagements, the observing of which would be prejudicial. Examples of treaties, broken in that manner, occur every where; it is not my intention to justify them all; but I may venture to assert, that there are some, which either necessity, or prudence, expediency, or good of the people, obliges one to infringe, as the only means of escaping ruin. If Francis I. had fulfilled the Treaty of Madrid, he would, in the cession of Burgundy, have established an enemy in the heart of his possessions. He would have reduced France to the unhappy condition she was in under Lewis XI. and XII. If, after the battle of Muhlberg, gained by Charles V. the Protestant league of Germany had not strengthened itself with the support of France, it could not have preserved itself from the chains which Charles had so long been forging for it. If the English had not broken the alliance so contrary to their interests, in which Charles II. had engaged with Lewis XIV. they would have risked the diminution of their power, the more, as in the political balance of Europe France must have greatly outweighed England. Wise men, who foresee effects in their causes, should in time circumvent those causes, so diametrically opposite to their interests. I must be permitted to explain myself minutely on this delicate point, on which a decided opinion has seldom been given. It appears to me clear and evident, that an individual should scrupulously adhere to his word, even though it had been inconsiderately given. If he suffer, he may have recourse to the protection of the laws; and whatever may happen, an individual only can suffer. But to what tribunal can a sovereign have recourse, if another prince violate his engagements towards him? the act of an individual can bring evil only on a single person; but that of a sovereign, a general calamity upon the whole nation. Thus it is come to a single question, Whether the

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people should perish, or the prince break his treaty? who would be so weak as to hesitate which alternative he would embrace? It appears, from the cases just now cited, that before we come to a decisive judgment on the actions of a sovereign, we should first minutely examine the circumstances under which he acted, the conduct of his allies, the powers which he had, and the means that he might want to fulfil his engagements. For, as has already been remarked, the good or bad state of the finances, may be considered as the public pulse, which has more effect in political and military operations than is generally known or imagined. The public who are ignorant of these details, judge only from outward appearances, and are consequently misled often in their decisions. Prudence prevents us from undeceiving them; for it would be the height of folly to expose, through vain glory, the weak parts of the government; the enemy would be gratified by such a disclosure, and would not fail to profit by it. Wisdom then requires, that we leave the public in possession of the liberty to form rash judgments; and not being allowed to justify ourselves during life, that we be content with clearing up our characters in the disinterested eyes of posterity.

A few general reflections may not be ill-timed on the occurrences of the æra to which I refer. I have observed, that little states can sustain themselves against the most powerful monarchies, where there is industry and order in the administration of their affairs. Great empires are full of mismanagement and confusion, for the most part, and are supported merely by the vastness of their resources, and the bulk of their mass. The intrigues that prevail in these courts, would destroy less powerful sovereigns, and do great injuries to them; but they do not counterbalance the weight of formidable armies. It is a remark I have made, that all wars carried on at a distance from one's frontiers, are not crowned with the same success as those upon the borders of one's own country. This proceeds, perhaps, from the natural feelings of men, who perceive that it is more just to defend themselves, than to strip their neighbours. But probably physical reason has
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more effect than moral; I mean that resulting from the difficulty of supplying an army at a distance with provisions, recruits, and warlike stores. Besides, the farther an army penetrates into an enemy's country, the more apprehensive it must be of difficulties, and of having its retreat cut off. I see the decided superiority of the English fleet over the combined one of France and Spain; and in perceiving it, am astonished how the navy of Philip II. which had formerly the advantage over both the English and the Dutch, has not preserved its advantages. I observe also with surprise, that all those armaments are calculated more for ostentation than effect, and that instead of protecting commerce, they serve only to oppress it. On the one hand I see the King of Spain, sovereign of the mines of Mexico and Peru, in debt in Europe; and on the other, the King of England profusely scattering with both hands the riches of the nation, which thirty years of industry had accumulated in Great Britain, to sustain the Queen of Hungary and the Pragmatic Sanction---independently of which, that Queen is obliged to sacrifice some provinces, in order to retain the rest. The capital of the Christian world opens its gates to the first comer, and the Pope no longer daring to hurl his anathemas on those who lay him under contribution, is obliged to confer his benedictions on them. Italy is over-run with strangers, who are contending with each other for the sovereignty of that country. The example of England draws the Dutch into a war, in the issue of which they are not interested; and those Republicans, who in the days of Eugene and Marlborough, sent deputies to regulate the military operations of their armies, think it unnecessary, when their troops are headed by a Duke of Cumberland. The North becomes inflamed, and brings on a war ruinous to Sweden. Denmark takes the alarm, and gets into an agitation that afterwards subsides into a calm. Saxony changes sides twice, and gets nothing by either, but a Prussian army and desolation. A conflict of events changes the grounds of hostilities; the effects however still remain, though the motives exist no longer. Fortune passes with rapid strides from one to another, while ambition and thirst of vengeance fan the flames
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of war. One seems to behold a party of gamblers, who, eager to have their revenge, never quit play till they are entirely ruined. If the English Minister be asked, for what reason he prolonged the war? he would tell you it was because the French could not have resources for another campaign. The Minister of France, if asked a similar question, would assign the very same reason in regard to England. What is most to be lamented in this system of politics is, that it sports with the lives of men, and that human blood is spilt to no end. If by a war we could contrive to ascertain our several possessions, to fix our boundaries beyond dispute, and to settle that balance of power, which it is so necessary to maintain between the princes of Europe, we might consider those who perish, as victims sacrificed to the public tranquillity. But does not the contention for a province or two in America involve all Europe in a war by land, and on the ocean? Those who are thus spurred on by ambition should reflect, that military arms and discipline being of much the same standard throughout the European states, and alliances generally forming a balance between the belligerent parties, all that princes can expect to acquire by the most decisive advantages in the present times, is some little frontier town or precinct, the value of which can be in no proportion to the expences of the war, and the population not equal to the number of citizens who have perished for the acquisition of it.

Whoever will give up a mind, susceptible of compassion, to the consideration of these objects, must be shocked at the evils which statesmen bring upon mankind, through want of reflection, or a blind obedience to their passions. Reason prescribes to us a rule on this head, from which no Minister should deviate; that is, to seize an opportunity, when favourable, for enterprize, but not to hazard every thing by forcing it. There are moments that require our utmost activity and exertion; but there are others in which prudence consists in inaction. This matter requires the most profound reflection; for we must not only examine the actual state of things before our eyes, but we must consider all the probable consequences, and weigh the means

means we have with those possessed by our adversary, that we may judge which is most likely to have the advantage. If the decision is not founded on reasoning alone, if our passions are allowed to influence, no success can be expected from such an enterprise. Politics require coolness, and the principal merit of a statesman must be the doing every thing in its proper season. History sets before us many examples of wars rashly undertaken. We have only to recall to mind the life of Francis I. and the account *Bran-tome* gives of that unfortunate expedition into the Milanese, when Francis was made prisoner at Pavia; we have only to remember how little Charles V. profited by the opportunity that was offered to him after the battle of Muhlberg, to subdue Germany: we need only turn back to the history of Frederick V. Elector Palatine, to be convinced of the precipitation with which he engaged in an enterprise beyond his force. And in latter times, we may recollect the conduct of Maximilian of Bavaria, who in the war about the Spanish succession, when his country was in a manner blocked up by the allies, chose to side with the French, merely to be stripped of his possessions. And more recently, Charles the XIIth. King of Sweden, affords a striking instance of the fatal consequences which the madness and misconduct of sovereigns bring upon their subjects. History is the school for princes; it is there that they should make themselves acquainted with the errors of past ages, in order to avoid them, and to learn, that they should act upon a regular and well disposed plan; and that the prince whose designs are the result of calculation, will always have the advantage over those who act inconsiderately and without system.

THE END.



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